

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS

INFORMANT: GABRIELLA M. BOND

INTERVIEWER: ROBERT GABRIELSKY

DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 1989

PLACE: GABRIELLA'S OFFICE, MAIN STREET, NORTH ADAMS, MA.

R = ROBERT

G = GABRIELLA

SG-NA-T007

Tape begins with interviewer in mid-sentence:

R: The date is February 27, 1989. We're interviewing Gabriella M. Bond for the Shifting Gears Oral History Project in her office on Main Street in North Adams. First of all, where were you born?

G: In North Adams.

R: Where were your grandparents born?

G: In Italy. My parents were born in North Adams, both parents.

R: Uh huh. So all four grandparents were born in Italy?

G: Yes.

R: Do you remember your grandparents?

G: Oh yes! Yes!

R: Uh huh. Do you know what part of Italy they were from?

G: Oh yes. My father's people were from Luca, in Tuscany and my mother's people were from Calebria.

R: Um, did you remember any stories that your grandparents told you about their youth? About

when, where they were from, or growing up, or anything like that? Do you have any recollection of anything like that?

G: Um, I lived in the same house with my mother's parents. His name was William [Gelotti?]. And um, so I spent a lot of time with those two grandparents. [R: Umhm] Um, my grandmother was the only daughter and she had four brothers. And she came to this country when she was about thirteen. Her father was dead. [R: Umhm] The mother brought all of the children here. He was a lawyer, or something in Italy. So when they came they, she had you know, some money to set her up.

R: Umhm, they came fairly prepared.

G: And um, she settled first in New York City. And I am not sure (--) My grandfather came to this country through Canada. He went to Canada first, and lived in Canada and came in through Canada, not through the regular immigration. [R: Ellis Island?] Ellis Island, whatever. Um, I'm really not sure how they ever met, but I know that my grand, my grandmother was sixteen when she got married. Um, they came to North Adams because my grandfather worked in the, for the Arnold Print Works.

R: Uh huh. So he worked on Marshall Street?

G: Yes he did. And he was a foreman. He was also an inventor.

R: Umhm. He must have been an engineer.

G: And one of them, inventions that he produced and I still have all of the patent papers and so forth, was a cloth straightening machine that's still used in every factory today that manufactures cloth.

R: Wow, and you have these? You have these documents?

G: Yes. Now he also (--) I have, I have some of the patents. My uncle has some. Some of them are back in Italy, because after my grandmother passed away he made about fourteen trips back and forth to Italy. And he married a woman there. And he died there in Italy. Um, he, in fact until the day, the last trip he made here he wanted me to find him an engineer, because he had another idea he wanted to put down on paper and to get patented and so forth. But I had, by that time he had spent so much time in Italy he had lost a lot of his english and he wanted someone who could speak Italian. And the only place I could think of to find engineers was at GE, but I never did get around to doing it. But he was an inventor. And he use to invent things for my grandmother. Like uh, to make her life easier. She had twelve children, six boys and six girls. And one of the things was hanging out the laundry, with all of these kids and grandchildren and everything running around. So in our back yard we had a clothesline that you could wind up and put up in the air after you put the clothes on them. So that the kids could all play without running into the sheets and whatever. And then when my grandmother wanted to take them in she would wind this thing down and take the clothes in. He also invented for her a cheese grater, because she liked to grate her own Romano cheese and so forth.

Um, but to get back they were um, she was married when she was only sixteen years old. She

was also um, when she came to this country insisted on speaking english. So that in her family only english was spoken. I laughed because I swear she learned english by listening to soap operas. You know, the fifteen minute (--) [R: cliches] The little fifteen minute soap operas that used to be on the radio. [R: Sure, the radio] I grew up with them. Um, she also, they owned property.

R: Here in North Adams?

G: Yes. And I have been told by a few people, Italian people in North Adams who remember, said to me, we used to call your grandmother "La Donna" because, which means "lady" in Italian. And when anyone had to do any business with the bank, or uh, anyone who uh, what do I want to say, was in business, because their english wasn't very good my grandmother, they would always go to my grandmother [R: she was the go between] who would accompany them and make sure that you know, no one was being cheated and that everything was on the up and up.

R: I'm very interested in these patent papers, patent papers, these patented inventions, especially this thing, this cloth straightening machine. Was this actually used? To your knowledge was this used by the Arnold Print Company.

G: Oh yes! [R: Uh huh] Oh yes! And I have the (--)

R: And you have the (--) Would it be possible to make copies of these documents?

G: Yes. I don't have all of them. And the interesting this is um, at that time, um, God I have to think of his name. In North Adams. Uh, why can't I think of his name? He ended up working for Sprague. He used to work for the Arnold Print Works. G. B. Flood.

R: Oh yes. The treasurer.

G: You've probably heard of G. B. Flood.

R: The treasurer. Yeah, right.

G: G. B. Flood worked for the Arnold Print Works. And um, he helped "my grandfather" to get all of these things patented and so forth. And every time my grandfather would have an invention he would take it to Mr. Flood. [R: Uh huh] I don't, I probably shouldn't be saying this because I don't really know the whole story, but I do know that he would take his inventions to Mr. Flood who would give him \$500.00 and at that time was a lot of money, and take the invention. So that my grandfather never made a lot of money on his inventions.

R: Umhm. That was fairly typical. It's still the case today with engineers in fact.

G: But Mr. Flood made a lot of money. But my grandmother would take the money and buy real estate. [R: Uh huh] And she owned, at the time of her death, she owned three different houses. Um, but I have some of the papers, but I don't (--) Like I say, he made all of these trips

back and forth to Italy and a lot of the things [few words unclear].

R: I'd be very excited to see if you could find any of that. I'd be very excited to see it. What are your own earliest memories?

G: Well I lived on Lincoln Street, which is where the urban renewal is, the first urban renewal. And um, that's where my grandmother owned the property. Of course we weren't far from the Arnold Print Works, which later became the Marshall Street Plant. And at that time the Venerini Sisters, which are Italian nuns in the Italian church was right in that vicinity.

R: Right across the street from Marshall Street wasn't it? Right across the street from the plant?

G: Yes. It was the novitiate for the Venerini Sisters and Webber Avenue was there. [R:
Umhm] And the Venerini Sisters ran a daycare center. [R: Yeah] And (--)

R: Nursery Schools they called them.

G: It was, it was really daycare. [R: Uh huh] I, I was with those nuns when I was a baby, and they always remembered the twins, because I'm a twin. [R: Uh huh] Um, and we were, like I say, we were with, we weren't even in the daycare. We were always with the nuns. We ate with them, we did everything. The other kids didn't, we did. We were spoiled. But I can remember in the playground of uh, on Webber Avenue at four o'clock everyday. My uncle also worked at the Arnold Print Works and he would walk up Webber Avenue to get to Lincoln Street and I would wait for him at the gate, because he was my favorite uncle. And he would stop and talk to me on his way home.

R: So this had to be (--)

G: This had to be 1940. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] '38?

R: Right. Just really about to close actually in a couple of years.

G: '38 to '40, yeah.

R: Yeah. Uh, where did you go to school?

G: I went to St. Joseph's School. And then I went to an academy in Worcester that was run by the Venerini Sisters. And then I (--)

R: Did you stay there, [G: yes] or did you commute?

G: No, no. No. [R: You lived (--)] It was a boarding school. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] And then I graduated from St. Joseph's High School.

R: Uh huh. So what years were you in Worcester? What years did you go to school?

G: I was in Worcester from '46 to '49.

R: Now what was that, like junior high, or (--)

G: No, it was sixth, seventh and eighth grade.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Uh, so then, and you went to Drury?

G: No, I went to St. Joe.

R: St. Joe. Oh that was a high school then?

G: Yes.

R: Uh huh.

G: Yes. It was first grade through twelfth grade.

R: Uh huh. So you went there for a little while and then you went to a boarding school. And then you came back and you went through high school there?

G: And I have three sisters and they all, we all went to St. Joe.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Uh, what was your first job?

G: My first job was at Sprague Products. When I went to apply for a job (--)

R: This was right out of high school?

G: No, I went to college.

R: Where did you go?

G: I went to Bryant College in Providence, Rhode Island. [R: Uh huh] It's now in Smithfield, Rhode Island. [R: Yeah] My mother owned a restaurant in North Adams. And when I got out of school (--) Bryant at the time used to give a degree in two years, but you had to go through [R: right through the summer] the summer, right. [R: Yeah] So um, I took the month of August off and then I went and applied at Sprague, because (--)

R: Did a lot of Italian's go to Bryant? I interviewed someone else here (--)

G: Well my brother-in-law went to Bryant. It's probably why I went. And he, his name is Frank [Torkier?].

R: That's not him.

G: No, who?

R: It's just that I can't remember. It's Tony uh, I can't remember his last name. It's in my, it's in my file and I'm just going up on it, I'm sorry.

G: Um, I was the only (--) No, when I was at Bryant there were three other fellows there from North Adams. So there were four of us there from North Adams at the time.

R: This was primarily business core right?

G: Yes, and secretarial. [R: Yeah] I had this weird idea that if I wasn't a secretary that I could not get a job in North Adams, which was very foolish of me. So I went to secretarial school. I took the executive secretary course at Bryant and found out I couldn't type or take shorthand. Boy I'd get an "A" in english, literature, or whatever. [Both laugh] I went to apply at Sprague and at the time that I applied I was told the only job available was a temporary job in Sprague Products, because Sprague Products was just installing new business machines. They were starting to put things (--) This is before computers. These were um, book keeping machines, which really was the starter before putting everything on computers. And they needed extra help during this conversion period. So I said, all right, I'd take the job. And she said, well it's only for a month. Well, when the month was over (--) They had hired three girls, when the month was over they kept me and asked me if I would stay for a couple of more months, because everyone in the department needed to take a vacation and they needed to replace people as they went on vacation. So I ended up working in Sprague Products for three months and then I was laid off at Christmas time.

R: When was this?

G: In 1954.

R: That was right after you completed college?

G: Yeah, I only went for a year.

R: Uh huh. So you, what month of the year again was this that you started?

G: September.

R: You started in. So you had gone through, you had gone, you had taken a full year course there and then come back. [G: Yeah] Uh huh. And then you were laid, and then you were laid off?

G: And then they laid me off at Christmas, because there weren't any other openings. [R: Uh huh] Um, the funny thing is, is when I was laid off I never collected unemployment, because just never, you know, we just didn't collect unemployment unless you needed the money. [R: Uh huh] And I didn't need the money. So I never collected unemployment. Um, in the end of (--) I was only out for a month. At the end of that time the personnel office from Sprague called

me back and I went in for an interview. And Marion Karen, whom I'm sure everyone has mentioned at some point or another, told me there was a job opening in payroll. And she as much as told me either take it, or don't come back. Marion Karen, and I'm going to say this because I'm not the only person who noticed it. In fact I just spoke to someone the other day concerning this. Marion Karen I think, had a thing about girls who went to college.

R: Prejudice?

G: I honestly believe it. And I know Marion and I graduated with her daughter from high school. Her daughter, I know her daughter well. This other women in town was older than I am, had gone to college and married a local attorney and moved back here and went to Sprague looking for a job, and was told there were none. Then happened to run into someone who said "gosh, we're crying for help." And she got the job over Marion Karen's head, which is what happened a lot. Marion Karen took my two sisters, who both graduated from [Becker?] College in 1949 and put one of them in the warehouse, put the other one as a part-time production clerk, meaning she was doing production work half of the time. And these were girls that went to college. And in 1949 there weren't a lot of girls that went to college from this area. [R: Uh huh] So I do think she had a little prejudice when it came to people who went to college. Uh, my sisters had said to me, because they worked in Sprague, when I told them that I was offered the job in payroll they said, oh, you don't want to work for Jim Gordon. He is so tough, he is so hard to work for. And I said, well I have to take it, because if I don't take it I'm out. So I went to work for Jim Gordon. And a strange thing happened, because I wasn't there two days and came down with a strep throat. And they only give you two weeks to learn a job. [R: Umhm] So I was very, very sick. And I could not go to work. By the time I went (--) I was out of work for about a week. When I went back I'm sure Mr. Gordon thought you know, is this girl ever going to come back? I only had two days left to learn the job and the woman left. She just left and that was that. So I had to kind of teach myself the job. And I was working with everybody's mother.

R: Huh, you were new to all of this.

G: I, all the women, at least four or five of the women there were the mothers of boys that I knew.

R: Of boys that you knew!

G: So I was really intimidated. Um, anyway I managed to get through. And after about a month, or maybe six weeks after I was in the job, maybe it was even two months, I don't know. What we did in payroll and they were in the process then of putting everything on computers, but we were manually doing all of the bonus slips. You know, figuring bonus for all of the people. And we all had our different departments to do. And one of my largest departments, everyday they would send down in an envelope the um, the little cards, the bonus. And the payroll had to be completed Tuesday in order to get it into the tabulating department for the checks to be issued by that week. So not being that familiar with the job, because I hadn't been there that long, I was figuring up what I thought were the time slip for Friday. And when I was all finished and had all of these IBM cards with the little black marks done, [R: [unclear] standard IBM cards?] noticed (--) Right. I noticed they had sent me Monday instead of Friday. And I immediately got into a

panic and said, they're all wrong. And they all had to be re-done. And the supervisor at the time, and I don't even want to say her name, nice gal, I went and I told her. I said, I didn't realize I was doing the wrong day. And uh, they all had to be re-done. And right now it's like quarter of five. Four thirty! [R: Chuckles] Well the gals that had been there for a long time said, don't worry, we'll help you. And three or four of the gals just pitched right in and was helping me re-do this. And then one of the gals (--)

R: These were all of the mothers?

G: Yes. And then one of the girls who wasn't a mother, who um, Marlene Hayden actually, from Adams, she wasn't married then, said that we couldn't quite get it done by five o'clock. And there is, there was no (--) I mean you just don't put in overtime unless you're told you could put in overtime. [R: Right, uh huh, yeah] And Marlene said to me, don't worry, my aunt Vicki works nights in here, she'll finish it. You know, she said, I'll leave a note for Vicki and she'll finish it. I went home and I was really shook up. I mean it wasn't that old anyway. Then I thought about it for a couple of days and then I got mad. I really was angry, because I thought the supervisor had no right to walk out and leave me in that kinds of a situation knowing I was a new employee, knowing I was young. And I got so mad I called up Marion Karen on the phone and I said, I want to talk to you. This nineteen year old girl picking up the phone and saying I want to talk. And I said, if you don't talk to me I'm going to the union. She said, come right over. [R: Laughs] And I went over. And I told her how I felt. I told her what had happened and I said I really (--)

R: You called her up at night at home?

G: No, no. Oh no, no. I called her (--)

R: On the job, you called her in her office?

G: Oh yes. I called her eight o'clock one morning when I got into work. [R: Uh huh] And she told me to come right over when I threatened to go to the union. And I explained what happened. And I said I really was upset because the supervisor walked out on me. And I didn't, I thought she should have stayed. She should have helped me. She should have told me what I had to do, even if I had had to stay over and punched out. It didn't make (--) I just didn't know what to do! Well um, Marian calmed me down, calmed everybody down, and I never did anything. But threatening to go to the union really got results.

R: Really got results, right. Uh, you mentioned the possibility of, in a certain corner they're being prejudice against people, especially years ago, against people who had a college education. Uh, did you experience (--) This is, also this is very sort of wasp Yankee region, did you ever experience any ethnic prejudice?

G: No. [R: No.] And Marian Karen if I'm not mistaken uh (--)

R: I didn't think necessarily on the job.

G: Oh.

R: When you were growing up, or anything like that?

G: Oh god are you kidding. Where we lived on Lincoln Street there were a lot of Italians, but there was a big brick block next to us, it was full of French and there were constant battles between the French and the Italian.

R: French didn't like the Italians, yeah.

G: The kids especially. [R: Uh huh] The parents didn't bother. My mother wouldn't even listen to any of it. She would just dismiss it you know. But um, and (--)

R: See, it was in those days that (--)

G: At the time that I was in St. Joseph's School with my sisters, we were the only Italian's in St. Joseph's School.

R: Is that French, or?

G: It's Irish.

R: It was Irish. Uh huh.

G: Yes, it was strictly an Irish school. And in order for us to go to St. Joseph's, my mother had to pay tuition for the five of us out of her own pocket.

R: Uh huh. Did the Irish had to pay tuition, or they (--)

G: No, no, because it was their school. It belonged to St. Francis Church. [R: Uh huh] And it was their school. And for anyone else to go they had to pay. And my mother I think, wanted us to have a catholic education. And that's why she paid for five of us to go. Now by the time I was in high school there were students from Adams, there were students that came out of the Notre Dame, because Notre Dame had a school up to the eighth grade. So a lot of them would transfer to Saint, St. Joe was the only parochial high school in the area.

R: Uh huh. Right, uh huh.

G: So they would come from Adams and from Notre Dame and then there were more Italians. But at the time I, when I was in grammar school we were the only Italian family.

R: Do you still go to church?

G: Do I? [R: Yeah] Oh yes! [R: Uh huh] I'm very active in St. Anthony's church too.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. What's, what is the nature of [unclear]? [G: Now?] [Unclear], through the

years?

G: Oh, I'm a cook. My mother (--)

R: You're a cook. So you cooked for like church dinners and that sort of thing?

G: My mother like I said, owned a restaurant. [R: Uh huh] And when they started the St. Anthony's bazaar, which runs for two days, I go in the kitchen. [R: Uh huh] And now during "Le Festa", two years ago, you've heard about our "Le Festa"? [R: Yeah] Yeah. John [Leeper] called me and asked me if I would fry dough, because he couldn't find anybody to fry dough. So now I fry dough for two days.

R: That's what you do [unclear].

G: Well I organize everybody to fry the dough, yes.

R: What's your favorite recipe?

G: Oh, I don't have a favorite recipe. And I don't um, I can do anything. [R: Uh huh] I'm not uh, I'm not usually the chef in the kitchen for the bazaar. I have been. I have run the kitchen several times, several years by myself. Now I just go in and work with the chef.

R: Are ethnic, are ethnic divisions between the Catholic churches, are they still as strong as they were when you were growing up?

G: I don't think so, but they were when I was growing up.

R: Where do you think (--) If you don't think so, when do you think they started to break down?

G: Oh probably in the seventies. There's been so much intermarriage that it's very difficult now to (--)

R: Probably in the seventies huh, that intermarriage took place?

G: Oh sure, yeah.

R: Um, so the job, the job that you took, the very first job that you took you were working at Marshall Street. [G: Yes] Uh huh. Um, and um, how did you end up in personnel? What happened?

G: Public Relations.

R: Public employee relations. How did the move take place from payroll to employee relations?

G: That's an interesting little story too. Um, by the way, I said earlier about Jim Gordon, Jim Gordon turned out to be a doll to work for. I just uh, I remember one morning I was standing in

the doorway and Jim Gordon walked in a nine o'clock. And I looked at my watch and I said to him, "we start here at eight". Like I say, here I am nineteen, twenty years old. And he looked at me and he laughed. And he said, "well I had to go to a meeting, but next time I'll let you know". And that's when I knew Jim Gordon, you could have a laugh with him. He really was a nice guy.

My brother-in-law worked for employee relations. He worked in the wage and salary department. And sometimes he had to come down and talked to me about business, being in payroll, discussing, but he came down one day and told me that there was going to be a job opening in publications and why didn't I apply for it? And um, he told me what the job was. I was working for the editor. And they wanted somebody who could draw a little. And so it sounded good to me. So I went and I applied over Marian, Marian Karen knew nothing about it. So anyway, my brother-in-law was in and out. And I was interviewed by Ken Brown. And Ken, the job was not as the editor, the gal who was the editor had been there for awhile. And she was excellent. It was for the extra girl that they had that did the typing and whatever. Um, and Ken was you know, a little hesitant, but he finally, I think he gave me the job because he happened to like my brother-in-law. And uh, but well okay, she can't do too much damage. And he hired me and over Marian Karen's head. Because if I had had to go through Marian Karen I never would have even gotten an interview. I know. And when I told Jim Gordon, he laughed and said, I figured something was going on. But he was just as relieved, because I had been in payroll for a year and a half, I didn't have enough to do. Because they were phasing it all out anyway, into the computers. And this way he didn't have to let me go. Um, so he (--) It all worked out very well for everybody.

R: Uh huh. What was the nature of this new job? [Unclear]

G: Well it was helping the gal who was the editor.

R: What did that entail? How did you spend a day?

G: Well mostly typing up all of the copy.

R: So articles would come in hand-written and you would type them out, or?

G: Well, yes. And besides that we had, that department at the time was in charge of company policies. So we had to type up all company policies and distribute them according to (--)

R: So they would go out [rest of comment unclear].

G: Oh yeah. Well mostly they went to management. [R: Uh huh] And uh, we you know, Marshall Street at the time took care of all of the branch plants. Everything was done in North Adams. [R: Yeah, yeah] Um, then what happened was, the girl I (--) When I, the first day I started on the job the girl who was the editor was on her honeymoon. Well she got pregnant on her honeymoon. So she comes back and two months later tells Ken she's leaving. So here is Ken with me. I don't have that much experience anyway. And all of a sudden, what's he going to do? Hire somebody over me, or is he going to give me the top job, or? So there was a little discussion about that and he decided to take a chance on me again and give me the job as editor. And what we mainly did all day was uh, Ken did a lot of the writing of the stories. And then I

did some later. What we would do is every month all of the reporters would send in their news.

R: It would be departmental reporters right?

G: Yes. And a lot of them (--)

R: A lot of them would be in production, right?

G: Yup. [R: Yeah] There was production and office, and it was a good size paper. [R: Yeah] We ran a trading post for them. People wanted to buy and sell things. Uh, and with the reporters news, a lot of it had to kind of be rewritten.

R: For spelling and punctuation and grammar and everything?

G: Yeah. And um, I did the actual layout, all of the layout. And did it um (--)

R: Uh huh, so you would do like a pay step and everything on this, or?

G: We didn't do pay steps, because they (--) It was (--) Every picture was an engraving in those days. [R: Uh huh, right] There wasn't any photo machines, or whatever. [R: Right, right] Every picture was an engraving and had to be sized and so forth. [R: Umhm] And we had to go to the engravers to get the engravings made.

R: You had an outside printer, or was it inside printer?

G: Oh no, it was outside. Excelsior did all of the printing for not only the Sprague Logue, but the Nashua paper, the Concord, the uh, they had a paper out of Wisconsin. We even did the paper from Puerto Rico. And we use to get [name unclear] to uh, because she spoke spanish, to (--)

R: Uh huh. So in other words all of the different branches had their own editions, or they were just completely separate papers?

G: Yes, they were completely separate papers. They were different sizes.

R: Uh huh, but they'd all be cleared through North Adams.

G: They were all printed and done here. Right. And they would send us mostly their own little local news and their departmental news. And whatever we used for a headline story usually went in all of the papers, depending on what we had for a lead story.

R: Uh huh. Uh huh. And uh (--) Well it sounds like a pretty ambitious position for somebody that had had your experience. Uh, that uh (--)

G: I had never even worked on a school newspaper, which was funny, but I took to it right away.

R: You got right into it. You didn't feel at all uncomfortable, or over your head, or [unclear].

G: And I don't think Ken was every sorry that he gave me the job. [R: Uh huh. uh huh] And then another thing that we did and it was something that I really initiated and worked on myself, was putting together a complete file of all of the management with photographs. Sometimes R.C. would be going to a branch plant and he wanted to know what these people looked like. [R: Right] He didn't want to have to walk in and say, who are you? So if he could have photographs of who he was going to be seeing, with a name to it (--) So I had a complete file of photographs with (--)

R: Plant managers and superintendents.

G: Yup, and all the North Adams too.

R: Uh huh, uh huh,

G: And we did it in case we had to do a story on someone, we could pull a picture out of a file, you know, an up-to-date picture an have something to use. But I thought that was a great service I did! [Laughs]

R: Were there any written and/or unwritten editorial policies? Guidelines either in terms of style or content?

G: No, because we didn't (--)

R: What was appropriate, or what was inappropriate to do?

G: We didn't editorialize a lot. [R: Uh huh] What we really put in it was an employee publication. And most of the news that was in there um, concerned employees. There's people who had made suggestions in the suggestion box and received awards, or it was mostly employee news. Or if some employee had done something, or any of the management, but there wasn't any, really editorializing.

R: Did any uh, (--) You don't have to be specific about this, but did any reports ever come in like from recorders that you had to make judgements about not just a matter of style or mechanics, but that the news item itself was inappropriate for the paper?

G: No. People didn't write things that were inappropriate. [R: Uh huh] They mostly just wrote about what the family, what everybody was doing. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] I don't remember ever having anything that was controversial at all.

R: Well I mean you know, that's basically what I'm trying to get at, because we have interviewed some people who were reporters. And they did say things like, you know, you could write anything you wanted so long as it wasn't controversial. That that seemed from their point of view that was kind of an understanding that they had.

G: Yeah. I don't ever remember even discussing it with anyone. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] It just never even occurred to me I guess. At that time everybody was one big happy family.

R: Uh huh, uh huh. Speaking of which, uh, you did say earlier on that you had this minor altercation and you threatened to go to the union. Were you at any point while you were employed at Sprague, were you active in the union in any way?

G: No.

R: No. Just that, there was just that one incident where you (--)

G: I just was automatically a member.

R: Yeah, and you paid dues.

G: But the minute I went to work for employee relations that was the first thing I had to do was resign from the union.

R: Right, right. Uh huh, uh huh.

G: No, I'm not really hard to get along with, but I admit that for the fifties I was a little before my time. [R: Uh huh] Because (--)

R: In terms of being assertive you mean?

G: Yes. Yes. And I've always been that way. And it really wasn't acceptable.

R: Is there, do you have a favorite issue?

G: No, I haven't even been through them. So I (--)

R: Can you take a look?

G: I don't think so.

R: Okay. I was just wondering if there was something you know, that (--) Was there anything that was (--) Without looking is there anything that you can remember that was outstanding, either as a project, or as an incident while you were working there? While you were doing this job? While you were editor of the Logue?

G: Oh [short pause], no. I could tell you how, why I ended up leaving.

R: Well I think that would be very interesting if you wouldn't mind.

G: Ken Brown was the head of publications. I was associated editor of the Logue. He was the

head of publications. And Ken was promoted to the [Fasalia?] Plant in California.

R: What else was being published? An annual report, what else?

G: Oh yes, we did the annual report. Um, I don't know, whatever. We did everything. All kinds of forms.

R: Uh huh. Okay, okay. I was just wondering if there were any sort of regular [internal?]. That was it.

G: This was uh (--) There were only, there was only Ken and two girls that did all of this. [R: Right] That was the department. [R: Yes] And besides doing this and taking care of all company policies, which was I understand ended up a full time job. The gal who ran the [addreser?] graph machine was, she used to do all of the time cards for every plant that Sprague had was done in North Adams. And Lydia would not go on vacation unless I ran her machines, because she didn't trust anybody to touch her machines. So if they broke down you were in a pickle. This was a real old fashion machine. [R: Umhm] And also the mimeograph machine was in with that. And everybody was always mimeographing, because there were no photo machine [R: right], photocopying machines in those days. And um, Lydia and I were the best at keeping (--)

R: They only had one mimeograph machine?

G: For our department, yeah. Also within our department was the wage and salary department. And at one point the gal who was the secretary got pregnant and left. And there was another girl in the office who was also pregnant and they didn't want to let her go. So they gave her the job in wage and salary, but she was so bad that the boys used to have me do all of their work. So besides doing all of my work and running the addresser machine when Lydia wasn't around, and helping everybody mimeograph, I was doing the wage and salary, which was fine, because I like being busy. I just, I didn't like sitting around. Um, after Ken moved up they gave the job to my brother-in-law. Well number one, one of the company policies that Sprague had was that relatives could not work together in the same department, which was a good policy, but (--)

R: Did that apply to the Spragues?

G: It obviously didn't apply to employee relations here, because I was working for my brother-in-law. And I like my brother-in-law and he's very bright. And he had never done any of this before, just like I hadn't. So I ended up teaching him everything. But I guess I knew it wouldn't work. Number one, because I was too outspoken. And if I did, or said anything out of the way, because we worked with Bob Sprague, Jr. was the head of employee relations. If I had done or said anything out of the way he would take it out on Al, on my brother-in-law. And I did not, I wouldn't have that. So I guess I knew one of us would have to go. And like I said, I didn't want a five year pin. And I didn't know where (--) I loved my job, but I didn't know where it would lead too. Bob Sprague, Jr. was never generous in giving me any raises. In fact, once when Ken tried to get me a raise, Junior said, "I'll give her the title." Well you know, big deal, the title. So I knew uh, and Bob Sprague and I did not hit it off too well. I was too outspoken for him. So I

told my brother-in-law that I composed a letter of resignation and I resigned. And I said, "I will stay as long as needed to train anybody."

Well John Weiner, who was the vice-president at the time of employee relations called me into his office. And he said to me, he said, " Gabe, you know that there is a job classification for female head of publication." And I looked in right in the eye and I said, "John, if I stayed here a hundred years he'd never give it to me." And he looked me right back in the eye and agreed. So there really was no reason for me to stay. [R: Uh huh] Um, and that's when they finally hired Marian Karen. [R: Uh huh] Not Marian Karen, Marian Manion.

R: Marian Manion, right.

G: And I was teaching Marian, still teaching Al. And I stayed for two months. Well it was getting close to the time when I was going to leave, when the world series came up. That's why I know it was the world series. And one of the things that employee relations did was to, the girls would take turns listening to the game. And we would keep score and then call the operators, who would announce it over the loud speakers to everybody. You know, what was going on, because there were more pools going on and everything, for the world series. And everybody wanted to know who was hitting the runs. So every year we used to take turn listening to two innings, or three innings and keeping track of everything. And in fact that year I typed up, for the mimeograph machine, a form that we could use that had you know, the inning and who hit and whatever. And um, at the time [Tank?] Wilson was working in that department and Cortney Flanders. And I think they like to stir the pot, is what they really like to do. They knew that I couldn't be pushed. And we were trying to get, this last issued that I was going to put out of the Logue, we were trying to get it finished. And um, they told me that I had to take the first three innings. And I said, "look fellows, you know, tomorrow is fine, today isn't good. Let me get this." Well they wanted to push. And I went out to lunch and I came back and they said, "either you take the first three innings, or you're through." And I said, "you mean to tell me that that is what it has come down to?" And I said, "the hell with you." And I put on my coat and I walked out. And I thought, oh, this is great now, because what happens to all of the recommendations?

Well I went to Mr. Gordon. I called him on the phone, Jim Gordon, because I had worked for him for a year and a half. And I told him what happened and he laughed. And he said, "you can use my name anytime you want and come in a pick up a recommendation, you know, for a job." I had recommendations from everyone, but Bob Sprague, who put on my record, "fired." After I had stayed two months to help train. He put "fired." At first I was very angry, but he never stopped me from ever getting a job that I wanted, because eventually, a few years later they brought back Ken Brown as the head of personnel.

SIDE ONE ENDS

SIDE TWO BEGINS

R: You left Sprague under these circumstances. Where did you uh, did you get (--) Did you find work elsewhere?

G: Well I was going to leave the area.

R: Were you single, or(--)

G: Oh yes. That was another reason why I said I would leave. My brother-in-law you know, he was married to my sister. They had two children. If somebody was going to have to leave the job it was going to have to be me, because I didn't, I didn't have any obligations, or.

R: Right.

G: I um, I went and worked at the hotel for awhile. Then I had my own business. I had a fashion shop in this building. That's how I met my husband. [R: Uh huh] And um,

R: Did you, did you, where did you get the dresses? [G: Oh, I went] Did you design them, or?

G: No, no. I went to New York. Well anyway I did that. And then I worked for Metropolitan Life and I moved to Boston. I lived in Boston for four years. I left the area.

R: You ended up working for Met Life?

G: No. No, as a matter of fact I went to work, I was so well trained in North Adams that they couldn't believe, they couldn't believe me in Boston. I would be in a job for three or four weeks and they'd offer me some fabulous position. I went to work for Mass General Hospital. When they read my resume they couldn't believe that I knew something about wage and salary. That I was the editor. That, in fact I published a couple of issues of the Mass General Hospital paper. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] Um, I didn't happen to like working in the hospital. I found the whole things very depressing. [R: Yeah] I ended up working finally for a couple of young Harvard men who were running a, what do I want to call it? Oh, they were brokers. And I had never done that, so that was kind of fun to do.

R: Uh huh. So how did you end up coming back here then?

G: I ended up marrying my husband.

R: You met him here.

G: Yes, and then he made a lot of trips to Boston.

R: I see. I see. Uh huh.

G: But actually, I was telling my husband you were coming in for this interview. And you should know that his father and Gordon Phelps were the only two local directors that Sprague Electric Company ever had. [R: Uh huh] And uh, Jack can tell you some stories about Sprague. And I don't know if you could get Gordon Phelps to talk to you, but Jack's father was the head of the development corporation at the time Sprague, he brought Sprague here, Frank Bond.

R: Yeah, umhm, umhm.

G: And um, like I said, he was the director until he died. [R: Umhm] They were also very friendly with R.C. and his wife socially.

R: Um, your friendships, especially when you were younger and working at Sprague, were most of your friends, did you develop your friendships on the job, or were most of your friends from off the job?

G: Everyone worked for Sprague. I mean it was difficult to find jobs elsewhere. I made a lot of friends on the job. And all of those mothers that I worked with, we all ended up being very good friends. We are still friends to this day. In fact all of the friends I made at Sprague I am still friendly with today. We had, we made our own fun. We would have little clubs where we would put fifty cents away a week and then go out to dinner when we had five dollars. In those days you could go out with five dollars and have a pretty good dinner. [R: Yeah, yeah] When I worked in employee relations we used to play on our coffee breaks, we used to play whist. Well we had so much fun that we had a little whist group that would meet one night a week at different houses. [R: Uh huh]

R: This started at work?

G: Yup. [R: Uh huh] And I (--) And like I say, I am still friendly (--)

R: What department were you in when you did that?

G: Employee relations.

R: Uh huh. Besides this sort of whist group and church activities and that sort of thing, what do you do off the job, or what did you do off the job? What were your pastimes or activities? [Comment unclear].

G: At that time I really wasn't that active in the church. My mother had a restaurant. I used to work two nights a week for her. I used to work from eight in the morning until eleven at night. I would leave Sprague at five and go and work for her. Um, so.

R: Where was her restaurant?

G: It was in North Adams. It was on State Street. [R: Uh huh] It was an Italian restaurant. Uh, what we(--) What did we do?

R: Where is a good Italian restaurant now?

G: Napolitano's. [R: Uh huh] Good ingredients. Very good. Um, we used to go out. There were local hang outs, once you got to be twenty-one and could drink.

R: Just bars around and that sort of thing.

G: Yeah. And I didn't really drink. I would go and drink coffee, but that's where most people would meet in an evening. And you'd end up sitting around a table with maybe anywhere from five to ten people. We just keep adding and subtracting.

R: Yeah, umhm. [Few words unclear]

G: We'd go to the movies. There were three theaters in North Adams at the time.

R: Right, umhm. [Mellock?] and the Paramount, and (--)

G: And the Richmond.

R: Uh huh. Aside from church did you, or do you belong to any clubs, organizations, associations, civic groups, political groups, you know?

G: Now?

R: Now or then? Basically some kind of civic activity.

G: I was (--) My mother was, was active in the democratic party. [R: Uh huh] So I would, I guess you could say I was with her. Yeah, we did get involved in politics, in local politics. In fact I tell my kids stories of what it used to be like in North Adams, because we would always have street parades. And somebody would get a truck and a small band, or whatever. We'd start up on Eagle Street and come right down Main Street, stop traffic and the whole thing. We did that during political campaigns. This town is, as far as baseball is concerned was really funny, because it's divided between the Red Sox and the Yankees. And in those days, before all the TV and everything, most of the men would, most of the men used to go to bars at night. [R: Uh huh] And uh, there would be (--) Come the end of the season if the Red Sox and the Yankees, and in those years there was a lot of competition between those two, we used to have a lot of fun. You talk about street parades. If the Yankees won, or if the Red Sox won. [R: Uh huh] We had hanging in my sister's bedroom pictures, eight by ten pictures of every Yankee player all over the wall. So we used to take them all down. My uncles would get so wrapped up in this world series and the Yankees.

R: So the girls were involved in it too?

G: Yes. They used to get my sisters and myself involved all the time, because we were (--)

R: You know, maybe I missed this, but you talked about your grandparents and your uncles, I don't know that I asked you, or that you told me what your father did?

G: Well my parents were divorced when I was very young. [R: Uh huh] My father worked for Wall Streeter.

R: Uh huh, as what?

G: I don't know, because from the time I was born (--)

R: Oh you never had contact with him?

G: They, my mother bought the Miss North Adams Diner. [R: Uh huh] And the diner was right across from the James Hunter Machine Company. And she and my father ran it together and it used to be open twenty-four hours a day. But then my parents were divorced. So I really didn't see a lot of my father after I was about six or seven years old. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] That's why I talk about my mother all the time. [R: Uh huh, uh huh]

R: Maybe you have some insight about this. This is, this come up several times. And um, I've (--) If this is uncomfortable for you to talk about, I mean I appreciate that, but I don't necessarily mean it about your own family. Um, a lot of the interviews, we've done about thirty interviews now, about twenty of them have been done by high school kids that have been guided and directly supervised. And in at least five of those instances we had examples of devout catholic families who had divorce in the family. Now especially when you're talking about twenty or thirty years ago, I find this very peculiar. The kids who were doing the interviews weren't sharp enough to sort of jump on that. To say, "what's going on?" And not only that, there were people who talked about catholics, who were practicing catholics who were taking communion, who themselves talked about being divorced and remarried. Uh, now I find this peculiar. I haven't done enough reading to know if this stuff was going on elsewhere, but my perception is that this was not approved of by the church. And (--)

G: What do you know about the catholic church?

R: Well you know, I was not brought up a catholic. I was brought up a protestant. It was very devoutly protestant.

G: So you don't know the rules of the catholic church. And I know (--)

R: I mean I know what the people tell me and what I read. I'm not catholic. So I (--)

G: The presumption are (--) Let me tell you, okay. [R: Oh sure!] And I've told you before. I've been with the nuns since I've was an infant. Infant, nuns, priests, you name it. The catholic church way back and my mother, I say now my mother was notorious because she was divorced. [R: Uh huh] I went to a catholic school. My parents were divorced because they were incompatible, which is very acceptable today. [R: Yeah, sure] As long as neither one every remarried [R: Uh huh, it was okay]. There was real estate involved. There was a business involved. [R: Umhm] In order to legally make it my mother's, and it was hers, there had to be a divorce. [R: Right, I see] The priest who was in, who was at St. Anthony's at the time, Father Mengello, knew the story. Knew everything. My mother never remarried. My father never remarried.

R: Right. Right. So it was okay. Right.

G: And if (--) The funny thing is, is when I was in parochial school we studied religion

everyday. And they would say you know, divorce, blah blah, blah blah. And I would just say to myself, "but they don't know." You see they are generalizing. Even when I was eight, nine years old, I knew they were only generalizing. [R: Uh huh, right] It never bothered me. [R: Uh huh] I knew my mother. I knew my father. I knew the circumstances they did not know. [R: Sure] They never were prejudice towards me, or my sisters. [R: Okay] The sisters of St. Joseph's adored my mother. Just adored her. Every years she would give them, and I'm going to tell you the Sisters of St. Joseph's in North Adams and a lot of the people from the Irish church don't even know this, were very poor. They did not get a lot of money. They did not have a lot of food. And in fact they used to send my twin and myself when I was about seven, eight years old, when my mother had the diner, they used to love westerns sandwiches. And they'd send up down after school. You know, they would open their little purse and take out twenty-five cents, which was a lot of money to them, to send me down to my mother's diner to but them a western. Well my mother would never charge them. She'd, you know, I'd come down with the order for these two or three nuns who would have it after school. And she would fix them up and I would bring them back. But when I was in high school, once a year my mother would send, she had the restaurant at that time, a complete diner. Italian dinner, starting with the antipasto, and the pasta and meatballs, and sausage and spumoni. And she'd send them a couple of gallons of wine. And when we would drive up with the station wagon to unload it, they would all be standing in the doorway all excited, because oh, they're really going to eat tonight! And my mother did it every year for them. Nobody ever knew about it, but me and the nuns, and my mother. But uh (--)

R: What were you (--) At the time (--) I've switch sort of gears [unclear]. At the time of the 1970 strike at Sprague, what were you doing?

G: Oh, I was not associated with Sprague at all at that time.

R: Uh huh. What were you doing?

G: Well I was married with children.

R: Uh huh. Do you, you remember the strike?

G: Yes I do.

R: Uh huh. Did you have any feelings about it, or did you have any perceptions of feelings your friends had about it, or anything?

G: Well I was home with small children at the time. [R: Uh huh] And I really wasn't involved in a lot. Um, I think that the people of North Adams were always very, very loyal to Sprague. [R: Umhm] And we all worked out tails off for them. And um, we never got a lot in return. I know I didn't. I went there working for a minimum wage, a dollar an hour. And I wasn't making a hell of a lot more when I left, being editor of the Logue. Um, you know, if you got a five cent an hour increase, it was like you know, some great gift from the almighty. Um, if I felt anything at the time I probably felt they deserved whatever they were going after.

R: To the strikers?

G: Yes.

R: Uh huh. Um (--)

G: And I know that Sprague did not like union plants.

R: Umhm. How do you feel (--) This was only a few years ago, but again you're part of the community here and everything. And because Sprague was such a major employer in the community, what it did, or ever to a certain extent still, what it does has an effect on the community as a whole, beyond just people who work there. With that in mind, do you have any feelings about Sprague pulling out of Marshall Street a few years ago?

G: Yes, yup. I was uh, I was very upset. And I was very upset with John Sprague, whom I know.

R: Uh huh. You felt let down? He let down the community, or?

G: John didn't like North Adams. [R: Uh huh] And he made it very obvious he didn't like North Adams. I thought Sprague missed out on a great opportunity, because I think that Sprague had a unique headquarters in a unique community in the Berkshires. [R: Uh huh] All of the excuses they used for moving to Lexington did not make any sense to me [R: umhm] at all. Going out towards Route 128 just made them one more of a whole line of people in the electronics industry. [R: Right] Whereas having their headquarters here, I thought they could have, with the money they spent in Lexington, they could have built an absolutely gorgeous headquarters here. But I don't think, John did not want to live in this area, period. And I understand whoever his right hand man was, and I don't know the name. I've been told it various times, but I don't (--) A few years ago Sprague had what they called a Croissant Club. And I don't know if you've heard about that. And it was a group who got together, who were trying to analyze Sprague's impact on the community. What was going to happen when they moved their headquarters? And they ran a seminar. And they invited a lot of business people in the community to participate. And it wasn't (--) It was all (--) It was Williamstown, Adams, North Adams. And I was invited to attend. And I really didn't know why me? Whether it was because they wanted a female there? I, in fact I couldn't figure out who had put in my name. I finally did find out who suggested my name. I have spent periods when I'm very active, and then I spend periods when I don't do anything at all. I went to this seminar for four days. And I was uh (--) Sprague paid for it. I understand it cost Sprague \$25,000 to put this seminar together. It was held at Williams College. Bill Reeve was involved. When the four days was over, Father Honan was there from North Adams. Don Thurston was there. There were a lot of you know, two banks, a representative, represented Joe Dolan was there and Bob Collins was there. And uh, Kathy Tysenger was there, she had just arrived to take over the North Adams State. In fact, the only women there were Judy Brunelle and myself and Kathy I think. I can't remember who else. Um, after spending the four days there, I have to admit I really didn't get anything out of it at all, except a lot of Williamstown prejudice, which always drives me up a wall. Um, I was rather disappointed with the whole thing. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] And it came just when we were having our bazaar, so I couldn't work at the bazaar. [R: chuckles]

R: What are your feelings about MoCA?

G: Well I'll be very honest. The first time I heard Don Thurston mention it I went through the ceiling. I said, and I'll tell you exactly what I said to him. I said, "I'll be damn if Sprague is going to drop it in our lap." The Marshall Street Plant. And it was before I really knew what was going on. Um, then I heard Tom [Krins ?] give a talk on it, because it isn't fair to judge without going and listening.

R: Oh he's a hard sell.

G: And I was very impressed. And I'll tell you what really (--) And I don't, I don't know if I'm even understanding it right, but what finally made sense to me was that a museum like the [Googenheim?], that has a lot of art and a lot donated, and has no place to put it, to store it anywhere in New York has got to cost them ten dollars a square foot for storage. And being in the real estate business I can understand rents. And I thought, "God, I mean we would just make a great storage base for a lot of that stuff and people can be looking at it at the same time." [R: Umhm] So the numbers all of a sudden kind of made sense in my head. And I thought you know, that really is a good idea. Um, and I liked the idea. I think it's a good use. I thought one of the comments made the night of the ball about, this is like driving through a medieval city, was great, because you know, for a lot of people who had never been in through all the back buildings and over all of the bridges and so forth, [R: Right, uh huh] it really is fun!

R: Uh huh, yeah. I still get lost. I've been there three times and everytime I try to get out I get lost.

G: I think it's a great use for the buildings. And I'm hoping it can be done and I hope all of the money can be raised. And I am going to do my part to help support it.

R: Um, I have one more big question, which is sort of an evaluation I want you to make. People have a tough time with this. I have a tough time with it. That's why I ask people the question. The project I'm with is called "Shifting Gears". It's sub-titled "Changing the Meaning of Work in Massachusetts, 1920-1980." And the idea of the project is the Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy has place a person like me in each of six different Heritage State Parks. One in Holyoke, Lawrence. So I'm not the only one. I have counterparts in five other places. And the sort of general thing that we're looking at, we're using our particular communities to look at this question, but the general thing we're looking at is this issue of the changing meaning of work in Massachusetts, 1920-1980. And we're all doing what I'm doing with you. We're all doing oral histories from people from coming through various generations. And one of the things that we're trying to get out of, the big thing that we're trying to get out of these interviews is to begin to try to answer that question. You know, how has the meaning of work changed from 1920 to the present? And every month all of our scholars get together for a seminar and we talk about our work and how it's going, interacting and stuff like that. And uh, there's been a lot of discussion about you know, how the oral histories are going and stuff like that. And so we were trying to get at this question. And I said, "well why don't we ask the people we're interviewing directly whether they think the meaning of work has changed since the

1920's, and how?" And one of my colleagues said to me, and this may sound like a shaggy dog story, but it takes a long time to set up. One of my colleagues said to me, "oh, he says, you can't ask people that question, you'll just get a blank stare and they won't know what you're talking about." And I said, "well that's the problem." "I'm not sure I know what I'm talking about when I ask that question." So why not ask that? The reason why this is as long as it is, is like I first started asking this question, how has the meaning of work changed in North Adams since you were a little girl, or since the 1920's, or whatever? When I first started asking, people would ask back, well what do you mean by that question? My response to them would be, I wouldn't let them, I wouldn't get hooked into that. My response would be, "well I'm not sure what I mean." [Laughs] "I mean what do you think it sounds like?" I mean, we're just trying to (--) This is a very sort of (--) I was on the radio about a month ago, I'm going to be on the radio this week. And one of the theories around this, why we do this, why we take oral histories, is the belief that ordinary people, the people not trained in the field, can do history. The most important historical questions I asked you were not when you were born, or when you grew up, or things like that, but how you felt about it. Because that's asking you to make an evaluation. And that's an historical question.

So now, after having said all of that, if you understand anything, if that has any meaning to you, how do you think the meaning of work has changed in North Adams since the 1920's?

G: Oh, I don't think it's just changed in North Adams. I think it's changed all over the country.

R: Well you can comment on that, but especially in North Adams. Is there anything special about North Adams in those changes? But you can say for the whole country.

G: Well in North Adams um, the means of earning a living have changed so many times, that it, that our whole population has changed. As the jobs change (--)

R: How? What's the most sort of dramatic, or obvious things?

G: Well the Arnold Print Works, or the cotton mills that were here, well they did employ some women, but a lot of men. Then when World War II came the men were gone and the women, Sprague was basically a female industry. [R: Yeah] And uh, for awhile when I got out of school and I didn't realize this myself, there were a lot of job opportunities in Sprague. There was a lot of research going on. There were good paying jobs for kids that got out of college. And then they all dried up. Sprague at one point employed over, well over 4,000 people.

R: Yeah, 4400 and that's probably during Vietnam.

G: Yeah, and then uh (--)

R: Jack Diodati, Bob Diodati.

G: And as the management jobs and the research jobs and everything went elsewhere, so went the people with [R: those skills?], sure. And one of the problems that North Adams has today is that a lot of the people that have the high paying jobs in this community don't live here. They

live in Williamstown. [R: Uh huh] Which is a drain on North Adams of brainpower to keep the city going. As far as government is concerned and so forth. We don't have the resources we did. [R: Uh huh] The people resources.

R: People choose to live in Williamstown.

G: Yes. [R: Uh huh] And it doesn't help. [R: Uh huh, uh huh] I find that my grandfather and they were all very happy to work. They worked long hours. People who, I told you this story on the phone, people who worked for Mr. Wall thought he was God. [R: Yeah] And he never gave them anything. Even until they died they thought he was God. They had no pensions, they had nothing. Then I watch the young people today. I watch my daughter. There's no way you could get away with what we all put up with. Even myself. I went to work for Sprague. There was no place else to go. [R: Uh huh] And if you wanted to stay here, and in those days people didn't, weren't traveling around looking for jobs like they did. So you just, you know, you did what the company told you. And you gulped and you did it, or you didn't have a job. And in North Adams, it's like you said to me, "what did you do when you left Sprague?" That was a damn good question. Of course a lot of people asked me the same thing. What do you do? Where do you go? Who hires you? [R: Uh huh] Especially if you walk out. Who in this community is going to hire you if you walked out on Sprague?

R: That was, you know. That (--)

G: They were, they were the big daddy. [R: Uh huh] I don't know that that will ever happen again anywhere.

R: That seems very, that seems very intimidating though. I mean, like when you know that. If you walk out, if [G: it's very intimidating] you, you don't, don't cross these people, or you're in trouble.

G: And I'm going to tell you, I lived here all of my life, and all of my life all I ever heard was, if Sprague leaves we'll be a ghost town. And when I went to this seminar I was just talking about, one night they were talking about you know, the strike and so forth. And I turned to the guy who was representing Sprague and I said, "I'm tired of it, I don't want to hear it anymore, if you don't like North Adams, then leave!" "I'm tired of hearing just because you leave, if you decide to leave we're going to be a ghost town." I said, "you leave and we will survive and we'll do something else." "You're not going to intimidate me anymore!" But I'd hate to tell you how many years it took me to get to that point.

R: Yeah. I mean that's sort of, I'm getting a lot of, a lot of interviews are like that. I mean it was sort of like the, how wonderful the Spragues were, or something, but then there's sort of the other side of that picture. There's sort of, you better think they're wonderful or you're in trouble. [Laughs]

G: The funny thing is I think it all started out being a lot of fun [R: Uh huh] and wonderful. I think R.C. and Julie and Mr. Ward (--) I, in fact I was telling my daughter the other night, because she didn't believe it. I said, "yes we saw them all of the time, they were always walking

through the plant." And they would (--) I mean if we were sitting there having coffee break, they'd stop and put their head in the door and say, "hi girls, how's it going today?" You know. Later that never happened anymore. I don't know whether the company got too big. I think that the next generation of Sprague's did not feel the way the father did and the uncle did. Um, it just, the whole thing changed. [R: Umhm] They made an effort with their employees. And they got it back in spades. People were very, very loyal.

R: Yeah, yeah. [Coughs] Well that's (--) I mean I've exhausted the formal and for the most part the informal questions I have. I really appreciate the time you've given me. Um, is there anything that you would like to add for posterity, or [unclear]? I feel really, this (--)

G: I think I've told you about all I can remember.

R: Uh huh, and probably some stuff you didn't think you could remember, right? Most people end up talking and [few words unclear].

G: Well I do have a good memory.

R: Yeah. Okay. Well thank you very much Gabe.

End of tap